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Maura Elizabeth Cunningham

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Reading Round-Up: Reactions to the Wenzhou Train Crash

August 1, 2011 in [The Five-List Plan](#) by [mcunningham](#) | [Permalink](#)

There has been a huge amount of reporting on the July 23 train accident in Wenzhou that killed at least 39 and incited a continuing outcry among Chinese journalists and internet users, as well as government efforts to silence such criticism. Here, a collection of links connected to the rail crash and its aftermath.

- Many journalists have paid special attention to the role of Twitter-like microblogging platform Sina Weibo in spreading information about the rail accident itself as well as providing an outlet for Chinese web users to express their thoughts concerning the larger implications of the event. See, for example, *The Hindu's* Ananth Krishnan on the [online activism of middle-class Chinese](#) in the wake of the crash, and Adam Minter's article on [pushback against government propaganda](#) for Bloomberg.
- At China Media Project, David Bandurski's "[China media muzzled after day of glory](#)" explores Chinese journalists' work on the train accident and the government censorship that has followed, including images of three pages that had to be pulled from a recent edition of *Chinese Business View* due to censor concerns over their content. For more on government treatment of the Chinese press, see [this report](#) at the *New York Times*.
- In the face of the government's efforts to impose a news blackout, however, China's *Economic Observer* decided to go ahead with a special report on the train crash entitled "No Miracles in Wenzhou." Josh Chin discusses [this defiant newspaper's actions](#) at the *Wall Street Journal's* "China Real Time Report" blog.
- David Bandurski also has [an op-ed piece on the train crash](#) for the *International Herald Tribune*.
- The view from abroad: [an editorial](#) from Japan's *Yomiuri Shimbun*; Michael Sainsbury [reports on the accident](#) for *The Australian*; and Reshma Patil of *Hindustan Times* discusses [what India can learn from China's tragedy](#):

While the Chinese chase speed, India is painfully slow and insensitive in modernising a creaking, over-crowded network that transports a Mumbai-sized population per day. The muzzle is now back on the Chinese media with fresh orders to report only positive and official versions on the accident. But the media's temporary burst of free speech and public sensitivity to the accident is worth noting. In India, we need to keep the railway ministry under the microscope and demand answers to some of the same questions clamouring across China, without waiting for the next tragedy on the tracks.

For Spanish-language reporting and analysis, see [the coverage at ZaiChina](#).

- In Hong Kong, [activists held rallies](#) calling for "a thorough and open investigation" into the rail accident.
- At Miller-McCune, Jeff Wasserstrom and Megan Shank write that "[China's High-Speed Crash Leads to Legitimacy Crisis](#)":

In recent years, China has suffered a series of man-made calamities and natural disasters. Many have been exacerbated by human error. These have led to angry online discourse and sometimes even street protests that ultimately could have posed a serious threat to the government. So far, Beijing has navigated the tumult and emerged with little damage to its legitimacy. We believe this moment is different — and not just because it took Wen Jiabao, the leadership's go-to guy in crisis situations (also known as "Grandpa Wen" for his bedside manners), several days longer than usual to reach the scene. This time a few compassionate words to families of victims, and the identification of a few suitable scapegoats, seem unlikely to suffice.

This could be the end of the confident era ushered in by the successful hosting of the Beijing Olympic Games; it could undo the post-Tiananmen social contract between the Chinese government and Chinese citizens that has allowed the political status quo to remain in place longer than expected.

- Jason Dean and Jeremy Page explore the "[Trouble on the China Express](#)" for the *Wall Street Journal*, writing that the rail accident "has transformed a symbol of Beijing's pride into an emblem of incompetence and imperious governance."

- Time.com has a [photo essay](#) of pictures from the crash site.

- After a hiatus, the Sinica podcast returned last week with a new episode, "[Train Wrecks](#)." Host Kaiser Kuo and guests Mary Kay Magistad, Jeremy Goldkorn, Will Moss, and Charles Custer discuss the Wenzhou train crash, the reaction it has provoked on Sina Weibo, and what the repercussions might be for China's leadership.

- Chinese blogger Han Han posted a commentary on his website that was later deleted, but ChinaGeeks has a translation of the piece, entitled "[The Derailed Country](#)."

- At the Asia Society's website, see [a collection of artistic responses to the train crash](#).

- Finally, visit ChinaGeeks for [a video and translation](#) of an update to Cui Jian's iconic 1986 rock song, "Nothing to My Name," which has been reworked into a version responding to the Wenzhou rail accident.